



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
New Mexico VA Health Care System

## ALBUQUERQUE FISHER HOUSE GUEST AGREEMENT: SERVICE DOG

VHA Directive 1188 defines a Service Animal as the following: A service animal is identified as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by the service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition. Service dogs in training are not considered service animals. This definition applies regardless of whether VA is providing benefits to support a service dog under 38 CFR 17.148. **NOTE:** This definition includes guide dogs and seeing-eye dogs. *This definition does not include emotional support or comfort or companion animals, or pets.* VA staff is permitted to ask the following clarifying questions related to service animals:

1. Is your dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or tasks has your dog been trained to perform?

If a guest is accompanied by a service animal during their Fisher House stay, the guest is responsible for the service animal at all times. Responsibilities include:

Individuals requesting Fisher House accommodations accompanied by service animals must inform the Fisher House Manager prior to check-in. Only one service animal is permitted to accompany each Fisher House guest.

- a. The Fisher House guest must provide documentation that the service animal has a current rabies vaccine and the core canine vaccines required by state or local law.
- b. The service animal must provide direct support to the Fisher House Guest. A service animal assigned to a hospitalized Servicemember or Veteran will not be permitted to stay in the Fisher House with the hospitalized Veteran's family member or Caregiver.
- c. The service animal will not pose a health or safety risk to patients, visitors, VA staff or other employees, or other service animals. In determining whether an animal poses such risk, VA staff will make an individualized assessment based on objective indications to ascertain the severity of the risk. Examples of such indications include but are not limited to: external signs of aggression such as snapping, biting, growling, or lunging, or external signs of disease or poor health such as visible parasites, diarrhea, or vomiting.
- d. The service animal must be in a harness, on a leash, or tethered and under control of the handler at all times. The service animal may not be left in the Fisher House unattended for any period of time.
- e. Service animals are restricted from communal food preparation areas including the Fisher House kitchen, except when the direct support/assistance of the service animal is required by the Fisher House guest during meal preparation.
- f. The handler must provide water, food and elimination breaks for the service animal as needed. Fisher House staff, volunteers or contractors are not permitted to care for, supervise, or assume responsibility for a service animal (that is not the staff member's service animal) while the service animal is on VA property. This includes boarding or kenneling the service animal.
- g. The service animal must be housebroken and trained to eliminate waste in an outdoor area. If the service animal eliminates its waste inside the Fisher House, or other area on VA property that requires the waste to be removed, the handler is responsible for such removal.
- h. The service animal must be controlled and well behaved at all times. Examples of the service animal not being in control include: barking that is not brought under immediate control by the handler and jumping on individuals or furniture.
- i. The Fisher House guest will be responsible for any damages to Fisher House property caused by the service animal.
- j. Fisher House guests who do not strictly adhere to the guidelines related to service animals will be asked to remove the service animal from the Fisher House. The Fisher House guest may also be asked to leave the Fisher House and seek alternative accommodations.

**I have read the Supplemental VA Fisher House Agreement related to Service Animals and agree to comply with all the stated rules. I understand that failure to comply with the rules may result in removal from the Fisher House.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Guest Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Guest Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date